

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Friday, November 6, 2015
First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach, Virginia**

DRAFT MINUTES

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Present

W. Bruce Wingo, Chair	Nancy Hull Davidson
Dexter C. Hurt	Patricia A. Jackson
Andrew C. Jennison	Michael P. Reynold
Isaac J. Sarver	Alexander I Vanegas

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Not Present

Vincent M. Burgess	Linwood M. Cobb, III
Harvey B. Morgan	William E. Small

DCR Staff Present

Joe Elton, Deputy Director of Operations
Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration
Lisa McGee, Director of Policy and Planning
Tom Smith, Director, Division of Natural Heritage
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks
Sharon Partee, Finance Director
Timothy Shrader, Eastern Field Operations Director
Bill Conkle, Park Planner
Michael R. Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Matthew Gooch, Office of the Attorney General

Call to Order and Introduction

Mr. Wingo called the meeting to order and asked for the calling of the roll. A quorum was declared present. He welcomed Ms. Nancy Davidson and Mr. Dexter Hurt as new members of the Board. Mr. Vincent Burgess, also a new member was unable to attend the meeting.

Approval of Minutes from the May 28, 2015 Meeting

MOTION: Ms. Jackson moved that the minutes of the May 28, 2015 meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board be approved as submitted by staff.
SECOND: Mr. Reynold
DISCUSSION: None
VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Director's Report - Joe Elton, DCR

On behalf of Director Clyde Cristman, Mr. Elton welcomed the Board members to First Landing State Park, formerly known as Seashore State Park. He introduced Lisa McGee as the new Director of Policy and Planning for the agency and advised that the Division Directors would provide the necessary program updates.

Natural Heritage Update - Mr. Tom Smith, DCR

Mr. Smith presented a slide overview of the sixty-two Natural Area Preserves which included the following:

- Southern Appalachia, including southwestern Virginia, is one of six biodiversity hot spots in the United States, based upon imperiled species, important habitats, and diversity-of-life data from state Natural Heritage programs.
- DCR participates in an international network of natural heritage programs which helps Virginians make informed decisions and helps carry our efforts and information to conservation decision-makers throughout the Western Hemisphere.
- Prescribed burns are managed by the Division of Natural Heritage and are essential to restoration of native species, including Long Leaf Pine.
- DCR has been actively involved in a program to restore Long Leaf Pine. Over 140,000 seedlings have been planted.

Mr. Smith reviewed the guidelines adopted by the Board for the naming of new Natural Area Preserves. A copy of those guidelines is included as Attachment #A.

Mr. Smith presented a recommendation that the Board adopt the name Balk Knob Natural Preserve Area for the new Natural Area Preserve in the Town of Rocky Mount just across the valley from Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve. The area had been on the list for preservation for some time as it is one of the most globally significant areas and is a habitat for the rare Piedmont flameflower.

Board Action:

MOTION: Mr. Sarver moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation approve the staff recommendation to name the new Natural Area Preserve in the Town of Rocky Mount the Bald Knob Natural Area Preserve.

SECOND: Ms. Jackson

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Planning and Recreation Resources Update - Danette Poole, DCR

2014-2015 Land Conservation Treasures

- The Commonwealth has developed a set of conservation value Metrics to better assure our best forests, agricultural, natural, scenic, recreational, and open space lands are the focus of our land conservation efforts.
- Since January 2010 the Commonwealth has protected 175,578 acres toward the Baywide goal of protecting an additional 2 million by 2025.
- The goal of the Treasures program is to provide new *public access* to a natural, cultural or scenic outdoor recreation resource, and
- To, enhance outdoor recreation and *foster stewardship* of natural and cultural resources
- Virginia is trying to identify and register 1000 treasures. As of October 2015
 - 67 natural, cultural, and recreational treasures
 - 239 land conservation treasures

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee

- The inaugural meeting was held on August 19
- The committee expressed support for a state park bond of at least \$500 million.
- Support was expressed for new state funding for trails from either the bond or general funds.
- Recommended of two new full-time employees for the State Trails Program.

2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan Implementation

- Since August 2015, 21 meetings in partnership with planning districts.
- Creation of a 12-minute video to highlight VOP accomplishments for 2014-2015.
- A webinar will be presented in early 2016 summarizing the VOP regional meetings.

Design and Construction - Completed Projects

- Bathhouse Renovations (4 Buildings)
 - Hungry Mother, Douthat, Twin Lakes, Fairy Stone
 - Approx. \$1.2 Million- MR funds
- Drainfield replacements
 - Twin Lakes
 - Kiptopeke
 - Westmoreland

Virginia Scenic Rivers Program

Ms. Poole provided an update on the Scenic Rivers Program and two proposed designations.

- Proposed York River - Gloucester and York Counties
 - +/- 20 miles
 - Field work July 13, 2015
 - Support and guidance from the Waterman's Museum

- Assets: historic/ cultural, fisheries, buffers, rare natural communities, variety of landscape and views, and remoteness
- Proposed Rapidan River
 - +/- 63 miles
 - Field work July 29, Oct. 11-12, Nov. 3
 - Requests from Orange, Culpeper, Greene & Madison Counties
 - Assets: very remote, little development, historic/ cultural, fisheries, buffers, rare natural communities, variety of landscape and views

Board Action:

MOTION: Ms. Jackson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the designation of the York River in York and Gloucester Counties and the proposed section of the Rapidan River as Virginia State Scenic Rivers as presented by staff.

SECOND: Mr. Jennison

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried with Mr. Reynold abstaining

Board Comment: Mr. Wingo suggested that members go to the DCR website and sign up for the e-newsletters for parks and for trails.

State Park Master Plans - *Bill Conkle, DCR*

Mr. Conkle reported that a master plan for each state park is required before any construction work begins. Master plans are required to be updated every ten years but may be updated more frequently as conditions and funding change. He further explained that master plans represent the full build out of what the park would look like thirty years in the future and that the plans are posted on the DCR website.

Mr. Conkle commented that the goal is to minimize the impact of new facilities on the park and that generally about 15% of the park is developed.

Mr. Conkle reviewed the following master plan updates for Board Action:

Staunton River Battlefield State Park

- In 1951 a group of women donated 6.5 acres to DCR that has since become Staunton River Battlefield State Park.
- Additional land was donated by Dominion and Norfolk Southern.
- The 35-acre Mulberry Plantation was donated in 1999.
- Initially the park was a satellite of Staunton River State Park.
- The 2015 master plan update described both proposed facilities and improvements to existing facilities.

- The plan said “Consideration will be given to eliminate excessive misdirected or obtrusive artificial light in the park in order to maximize the dark sky effect and encourage astronomy and night-sky viewing.”

Board Action:

MOTION: Mr. Hurt moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the update to the Master Plan for Staunton River Battlefield State Park as presented by staff.
SECOND: Mr. Reynold
DISCUSSION: None
VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

York River State Park

- York River State Park is on the banks of the York River and contains 3.5 miles of river frontage.
- It is located near the heavily populated areas of Williamsburg and Newport News.
- Located within the park boundaries is the Taskinas Plantation Archaeological District which encompasses the 18th Century Taskinas Plantation, and is proposed for state and federal historic register designation.
- To date the park has been managed primarily as a day-use park. The day-use area contains a picnic area with shelters, tables and grills, outdoor play areas, and parking. Canoeing and kayaking are very popular and the boat launch at Croaker Landing is very popular.

Board Action:

MOTION: Mr. Vanegas moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the update to the Master Plan for York River State Park as presented by staff.
SECOND: Mr. Jennison
DISCUSSION: None
VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Claytor Lake State Park

- Claytor Lake State Park consists of 472 acres located in Pulaski County in southwest Virginia.
- The 2015 update places emphasis on connecting the state park to other resources in the community.
- The park is located near U.S. Bike Route 76 and New River Trail State Park.
- Claytor Lake State Park received Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in 1966 for campgrounds and boating facilities and in 1985 for a picnic area and swimming facilities.
- In compliance with the LWCF Act of 1965 and amendments thereto, the Commonwealth of Virginia is required to maintain the park for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

Board Action:

MOTION: Mr. Sarver moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the update to the Master Plan for Claytor Lake State Park as presented by staff.
SECOND: Ms. Jackson
DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Occoneechee State Park Sprayground Amendment

- The amendment proposed the relocation of the sprayground area proposed in the 2011 plan.
- Due to the cost of providing access and utilities at the originally proposed site, the location of the sprayground area has been moved closer to existing utilities and infrastructure.
- The proposed sprayground area will include a sprayground, comfort station, playgrounds, picnic shelter and parking.

Board Action:

MOTION: Ms. Jackson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the amendment to the Master Plan for Occoneechee State Park as presented by staff.
SECOND: Mr. Sarver
DISCUSSION: None
VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

State Parks Update – Craig Seaver, DCR

- Governor McAuliffe has been very supportive of Virginia State Parks and has visited 23 of 26 Virginia State Parks.
- Secretary of Natural Resources Molly Ward has visited all 36 state parks.
- In June, Virginia State Parks and the Executive Mansion hosted the inaugural Capital Campout on the grounds of the Executive Mansion. Twenty-three children from Metro Richmond Boys and Girls Clubs, ages 6-9 years old, participated in outdoor activities on Brown's Island, and educational and camping activities on the lawn of the Governor's mansion.
- DCR is preparing for the 80th Anniversary of Virginia State Parks scheduled for celebration in 2016.
- DCR is also promoting President Obama's national initiative to "Find Your Park" and the National Park Service "Kid in a Park" program.
- DCR will again host the First Day Hikes in parks across the Commonwealth on January 1, 2016.
- Division of State Parks has been discussing the issue of connectivity in parks. While some guests enjoy not having access to communications, others feel the need to stay connected and would be less likely to visit a park if service is not available. This is an ongoing discussion.

Financial Update – Sharon Partee, DCR

- The General Fund FY 20165 appropriation approved June 23, 2015 was \$43,748,501.
- In FY 2016 the agency received a central appropriation adjustment in the amount of \$1,729,148 to support an increase in salary cost and fringe benefits.
- As of the end of September 2015, State Parks is about 11.2% ahead of last year for the same time period.
- There were currently no items to bring before the Board regarding the State Parks Project Fund.
- The Water Quality Improvement Fund and Virginia Natural Resource Commitment Funds have distributed a little over \$7,000,000 through September 30.

Board FOIA Training - *Matthew Gooch, OAG*

Mr. Gooch provided an overview of the Freedom of Information Act as it pertains to public bodies and members of collegial bodies.

Election of Officers - *Bruce Wingo, Board Chair*

Mr. Wingo appointed Ms. Jackson and Mr. Reynold to serve as the nominating committee for the purpose of electing Board officers at the next meeting.

Other Business - *Bruce Wingo, Board Chair*

Ms. Jackson asked if there was any plan for the Board to have an active role in the General Obligation Bond proposal. Mr. Elton advised that DCR has provided information to the finance committees and that although a bond is anticipated, the scope of the bond is uncertain. He advised that staff would keep the Board apprised.

Ms. Jackson noted that in addition to the 80th anniversary of Virginia State Parks, 2016 would represent the 100th anniversary of the National Park System, and the 30th anniversary of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program. She suggested that a commending resolution from the General Assembly be proposed.

Board Action:

MOTION: Mr. Sarver moved that staff be asked to draft a commending resolution for all relevant anniversaries occurring in 2016 and that this be brought forward to the General Assembly.
SECOND: Mr. Vanegas
DISCUSSION: None
VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Mr. Wingo additionally requested for staff to draft commending resolutions for former Board members for the Board to consider and adopt at the next meeting.

Mr. Wingo noted that Mr. Small had been unable to attend the meeting due to illness. However, Mr. Small sent an extensive email to members regarding parks and the proposed bond issue. A copy of that email is included as Attachment #B.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next Meeting

Mr. Wingo suggested that it would be beneficial for the Board to meet again prior to the opening of the General Assembly Session and that he would work with Director Cristman and DCR staff to propose dates in early January for a meeting in Richmond at the DCR offices.

Adjournment

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Bruce Wingo
Chairman

Clyde E. Cristman
DCR Director

Attachment #A

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
Guidelines for the Naming of New Virginia Natural Area Preserves**

I. Guidance Statement

It is the practice of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to name new Virginia natural area preserves in a manner that respects the geographic place name and natural resources of the site. The naming of the natural areas will follow this guidance unless there is compelling reason to do otherwise.

II. Background

The Virginia Natural Area Preserve System was established by law in 1989 to protect and conserve *natural heritage resources* (habitats of rare plants and animals; exemplary natural communities; other rare natural features) throughout the state. This system of protected lands is administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and managed by the Division of Natural Heritage (DNH). Natural Area Preserve Dedication, in accordance with the Virginia Natural Area Preserves Act *Code of Virginia § 10.1-209 – 217*, offers strong levels of protection by placing privately and publicly held natural areas into a legally established statewide preserve system with statutory protection against most forms of condemnation and conversion to other land uses, and affords the highest legal protection in Virginia for biological resources.

It is the practice of DCR to name natural area preserves based upon the nearest place name as found on the United States Geological Survey Map and the primary habitat feature for which the natural area is being protected.

Although local parks often use the approach, traditionally, there has been reluctance in Virginia to name natural areas after notable individuals or donors. It would be more common to find a facility or trail that have been named for individuals as a way of honoring their achievements.

In most instances, owners of a Natural Area Preserve that will remain in private ownership express an interest in a particular name for the Preserve as part of the negotiation process, and DCR works to meet the owners wishes and conform to the standard naming practice.

Naming a Natural Area Preserve

1. Natural Heritage inventory staff assign a conservation site name to the area when it is first found to support natural heritage resources.
2. DCR's Natural Heritage Site Conservation Action Team establishes protection priorities and discusses potential names, and recommends a name(s) to the Natural Heritage Division Director based upon the standard place name – natural feature convention. One or two names will be identified as the Team's top recommendations.
3. The Natural Heritage Director will make a recommendation to the DCR Department Director. All name recommendations will be available for his review.
4. The Board of Conservation and Recreation will review the recommendation and make a recommendation to the Department Director.
5. The Department Director will approve the final name and it will be included in the Natural Area Preserve Deed of Dedication.

Approved by the Board of Conservation and Recreation, November 2006

Attachment #B

Email from William E. Small, Board Member to Michael R. Fletcher, DCR, November 5, 2015. Presented by Mr. Wingo at the meeting.

Hello Michael:

I have been under doctor's care most of this week trying to defeat some deep chested infection. I had hoped to attend the Nov. 6 meeting but I am still having a productive cough (green) and don't want to spread it to the Board. I will cancel my cabin reservation as well. Hope you all understand...sleeping 12-14 hours a day + naps and still very tired.

I also want to take the opportunity to share with the Board some thoughts from a private campground owner...

First, I am very ineffective on the Board. Not a one of you seems to understand that you are rubber stamping every single request made by the State Parks staff without thought of the impact on businesses in the state nor on the general budget. No governmental agency should compete directly with any industry, especially when that industry is providing the goods and services demanded by our citizens. State Parks are the ONLY area in which the state competes with the private sector...and they are creeping into areas that impact several sectors including restaurants, marinas, hotels, motels, bed-and-breakfasts, tourist parks, entertainment facilities, and wedding companies, as well as campgrounds. State Parks are treading where their former Director, Joe Elton, said they never would...providing entertainment facilities that he said would only be reserved to the business community like zip lines, swimming pools, restaurants, spray parks, water parks, and amphitheatres.

Second, from DCR's own study (Virginia Outdoors Survey), the opportunity to camp or stay overnight isn't even among the dozen top most popular activities, which are primarily using parks for walking and visiting historic or natural areas. State Parks should focus on their core purpose: "Conserving our resources, protecting them for the future." I support the Park's efforts to purchase and protect lands that have ecological, historical or geological value. But the State Parks have run amok in recent years destroying these pristine public lands to build campgrounds, marinas, swimming pools, water parks, playgrounds, picnic shelters, equestrian shelter, zip lines, restaurants, amphitheatres, and other entertainment facilities totally unrelated and contrary to the mission of protecting the land. Stick to back packing and hiking and leave housing, feeding and entertainment to the private sector.

Third, I am appalled at the costs associated with the bond bill that the Board has endorsed, now expected to be a half-billion dollars. The estimates are far beyond commercial costs for these items. For example, they propose building several "ranger residences" at costs hovering around \$450,000. That's the cost of a beautiful home in most subdivisions. And McCabins ranging from \$300,000 to \$500,000 each. And spraygrounds from \$3 to 4 million (these can be had for under \$1 million). Even more worrisome is the \$6.3 million to upgrade campground electricity to supply 50-amp service for "Big Rig" RVs, another items that Mr. Elton said would never happen. Big Rig RVs are simply incompatible with State Parks...stick to tents and shelters.

Fourth, I am working with the Virginia KOAs who have passed a Resolution (attached) opposing the State Parks bond bill. The Virginia Campground Association is also considering a similar move. Therefore, I have a direct conflict of interest when it comes to voting on any of the issues on the current agenda. For these reasons (in addition to my physical health issue), I will not be at the meeting November 6. My regards to the Board.

Attached:

**Virginia KOA Owners Association
RESOLUTION**

REVISED: 1/29/2016 12:49:00 PM

October 2015

WHEREAS the mission of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation is “to provide opportunities that encourage and enable people to enjoy, protect and restore Virginia’s natural and cultural treasures,” and the Virginia KOA Owners Association supports that mission.

WHEREAS the Department’s own website explains that “Conservation...it just means wise use. Conserving our resources, protecting them for the future.”

WHEREAS the government is further destroying the natural environment of our state parks by building more and more campgrounds and cabins and other commercial-type recreational facilities including upscale camping, 2-, 3-, and 6-bedroom cabins and lodges, marinas, amphitheaters, water parks, swimming pools, zip lines, restaurants, and other facilities once reserved to the private sector.

And WHEREAS the government should never use tax dollars to compete with businesses that are generating tax dollars and providing private sector jobs.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Governor and the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia shall promptly address the issue of state-private competition by Virginia’s State Parks.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Commonwealth of Virginia shall immediately halt expansion and construction of all campgrounds, cabins, marinas, amphitheaters, conference centers, equestrian shelters, sports fields, ski slopes, airfields, zip lines, water parks, swimming pools, and other commercial-type facilities and enterprises that destroy and degrade public park lands and that compete with private industry until such study is completed.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Virginia KOA Owners Association strongly opposes the proposed \$500,000,000 bond bill being proposed by Virginia State Parks unless it is stricken of funds for construction of campgrounds, cabins, and other amenities identified above.

BE IT RESOLVED that the State Parks be required to hire independent environmental, economic, and needs assessments prior to any future construction of commercial-type recreation or entertainment facilities.

BE IT RESOLVED that the State Parks make a concerted effort to reduce competition with private industry, including the contracting out of all services and construction that can feasibly be contracted (i.e., management of campgrounds, marinas, entertainment facilities, etc.).

BE IT RESOLVED that fees for all current state-operated facilities be based on fee studies of private businesses (i.e., campgrounds and/or entertainment facilities) in the state or within 100 miles of the park.

Background:

The Commonwealth of Virginia has been building a competition with private industry in commercial-type recreation areas including conference and entertainment facilities, campgrounds, campsites, lodges and multi-bedroom cabins, marinas, water parks, swimming pools, playgrounds, picnic shelters, equestrian shelters, and zip lines. The State Parks’ rationale for hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of new construction is in the Virginia Outdoors Plan which purports to assess the attitudes of Virginians about what they want in the State Parks. The assessments were skewed by the way in which questions were asked. Even so the State Parks chose to ignore the most primary needs of those surveyed (conservation of the environment for future generations) and instead select those items that are much further down the list (camping, RV sites, cabins) to include in their Master Plans for each

State Park. The State Parks also use faulty economic data to “sell” their plans to local and state officials and to their many “Friends” who lobby for them.

The government has at least once every decade floated multi-million dollar bonds to buy land for state parks. This is admirable. However, these bond funds are primarily used to build more campgrounds, cabins, marinas, and other facilities. Once again, the State Parks will return to the General Assembly for a \$500,000,000 bond. While there is no problem or issue with the Commonwealth buying more public land or offering outdoor recreation, construction on these lands should be halted or limited to prevent destroying the very lands that the state purports to conserve for future generations.

At the same time, the State Parks have chronic problems with maintaining their facilities and with the funding of the ever larger number of staff rangers and personnel. Each year and with the opening of each new park and facility the State Parks go back to the General Assembly for more personnel and more equipment. State Parks annually lose money from all of their operations. They do not pay local property taxes or hire local civilians. And they compete unfairly with neighboring campgrounds, marinas, and other facilities through lower fees, zero taxes, and other monetary breaks.

Conversely, the private campgrounds, marinas, and sports and entertainment facilities in Virginia collect and pay state sales tax, local transient tax, property tax, corporate and income tax, as well as employing civilian workers who also pay income and sales taxes. These businesses further contribute to local tourism programs throughout Virginia, spurring sales of gasoline, food, camping supplies, and sending their clients to local restaurants and shops.

In this Resolution, the Virginia KOA Owners Association calls on the Governor and the General Assembly to promptly address the issue of state-private competition by State Parks and to strip from any new bond bill new construction, especially of facilities that compete with the private sector.

Further,

- * The Virginia KOA Owners Association urges Virginia’s government to place a moratorium on construction of any new camp sites, cabins, marinas, amphitheaters, entertainment or sports facilities, and other facilities that compete with private enterprise.

- * No future construction should be undertaken in State Parks without first having an independent study to determine need and economic impact. We ask that the Governor require that the state agencies solicit independent feasibility studies to include occupancy studies of both state and private facilities within 100 miles of any proposed construction. If an unmet need is determined, then the state shall first attempt to contract for private companies to build and/or manage such facility.

- * Another solution may be contracting out management of all public facilities that could be managed by the private sector.

- * Furthermore, the Virginia KOA Owners Association requests that fees for all state-operated facilities be based on independent fee studies of private businesses (i.e., campgrounds and/or entertainment facilities) in Virginia and especially within the service area which shall be determined as 100 miles from the park.

KOA Signature sheet for the Resolution regarding State Parks
(All 8 KOAs have signed)

Fredericksburg KOA- Ron and Susan Hart

Charlottesville KOA- Ashley and Dane Nettleton

Natural Bridge KOA- Betty and Bob Conger/ Carrie and Ken Conger

Virginia Beach KOA- Barb and Keith Stachurski

Lynchburg KOA- Stephanie and Phillip Boswell

Fancy Gap KOA- Mark and Cheryl Manning

Williamsburg KOA- Gary and Donna Fout

Harrisonburg KOA- Monica and John Hucul